

offrandes and *Un souvire* are well judged, even if, in an ideal world, there would be a shade more ebb and flow. Given that the title of *Poèmes pour Mi* underlines that these songs are a marriage of words and music, the absence of texts is unforgivable at any price. *Christopher Dingle*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★



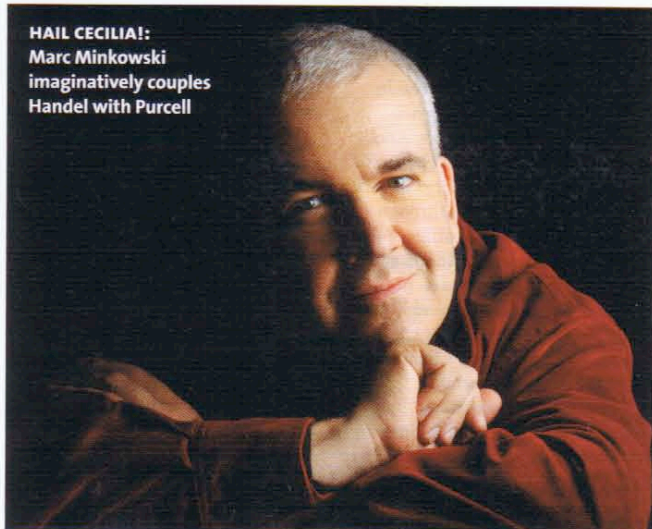
**PURCELL
HANDEL • HAYDN**

Purcell: Hail! Bright Cecilia;
Handel: A Song for St Cecilia's Day;
Haydn: Cäcilienmesse
Lucy Crow (soprano), Nathalie Stutzmann (contralto), David Bates (countertenor), Anders J Dahlin, Richard Croft (tenor), Neil Baker (baritone), Luca Tittoto (bass); Members of Choeur des Musiciens du Louvre/Marc Minkowski
Naïve V 5183 152:29 mins (2 discs)
BBC Music Direct £24.45

Mark Minkowski's latest album stumbles on the happy idea to sing Cecilia's praises through the mouthpiece of three of 2009's most august anniversarians. Logistics precluded inclusion of the mammoth last version of Haydn's *Cäcilienmesse*, so with Jesuitical aplomb Minkowski opts for the earliest state of the work – a Kyrie and Gloria – then undermines the cunning scholarly rectitude by adding two movements of the later Credo by way of 'encore'. Perhaps the justification lies in the listening since it facilitates a wonderfully intense 'Crucifixus' and an 'Et resurrexit' which ends disc 2 on a blistering high.

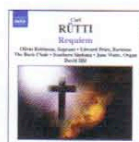
Captivating as it is to have a continental perspective on that most continental of English composers, the Purcell *Ode* – for all Minkowski's idiomatic theatricality and consummate synthesis of its French and Italian elements – registers less powerfully than the Handel. In part it's because Anders Dahlin's tenor never quite integrates the music's rhetorical diversity, and the choir, recessed in the sound picture, sounds a tad woolly. Lucy Crowe, however, is a natural Purcellian, and gilds the discs' triumph: Handel's *A Song for St Cecilia's Day*, a thrilling encounter with Dryden unmediated. Galvanised by Minkowski's exquisite detailing, the Musiciens du Louvre is on white-hot form throughout, but in the Handel, Nils Wieboldt's plangent cello sets the scene for 'What Passion' with such ear-tugging sensitivity a lesser singer than Crowe might have

**HAIL CECILIA!
Marc Minkowski
imaginatively couples
Handel with Purcell**



been utterly sidelined. Hail to Purcell and Haydn, but here Handel is the brightest Cecilia of all. *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE (HANDEL) ★★★★★
(THE REST) ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



RÜTTI

Requiem
Olivia Robinson (soprano), Edward Price (baritone), Jane Watts (organ); The Bach Choir; Southern Sinfonia/David Hill
Naxos 8.572317 55:02 mins
BBC Music Direct £5.86

Strings, harp and organ – the original Bach Choir commission for this Requiem specified the work should be for the same forces as Fauré's masterpiece. Carl Rüttli's finished product, however, feels an altogether bigger-boned, more explicitly dramatic composition: nowhere in the Fauré is there anything approaching the ferocity of the wrenching string writing introducing the Kyrie, nor the surgingly operatic imprecations of its soprano and baritone soloists. In stark contrast, the work both begins and ends *a cappella*, the soprano symbolising, as Rüttli comments, 'that we enter and leave life weak and alone'. These are arrestingly imagined, moving moments.

Rüttli's idiom is hard to describe without making it sound derivative – broadly tonal, certainly, but even at its most obviously 'accessible' (in the intimately lyrical Agnus Dei) with enough happening texturally and harmonically to interest a more sophisticated palate. Some of string writing (in the 'Communio', for instance) does recall Fauré, but with a

more troubled undertow, and overall Rüttli's voice is unquestionably distinctive. The Bach Choir has clearly taken this Requiem to its collective heart (by no means an automatic reaction to a commission!) and performs it with involving fervency under the experienced direction of the excellent David Hill. *Terry Blain*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



SCHUBERT

Winterreise
Mark Padmore (tenor), Paul Lewis (piano)
Harmonia Mundi HMU 907484 74:18 mins
BBC Music Direct £13.70

No icy wind bites through this *Winterreise*. That is partly due to Paul Lewis's oddly muted contribution, avoiding many of Schubert's sharp accents, though he's effective when water flows through the winter picture. As for Mark Padmore, who has torn at our souls as Bach's Evangelists, I wondered why, in spite of following closely with the recent Urtext score, I was phasing out of whole chunks. Could it be Schubert's fault? After seven songs, I took a diversion by turning to the lyric-heroic Peter Anders in 1945, an interpretation at the opposite pole to Padmore's musicianly but externally applied emotion. Anders bares wounds so extreme that it's hard to stay the course for quite a different reason; but you're never in doubt of the stricken journeyman's inconsolable condition.

So what would Padmore admirers find to enjoy? There's his hallowed

pianissimos, well matched by Lewis – though the eccentric leaning on and repetition of the grace-note for the final song is bizarre – and his game attempts to open up to anguish, even though a full A flat is still a strain and the lower register rarely tells. But I now hear a worrying spread in the voice, almost a judder in the crucial 'Das Wirtshaus'. A world-weary fray is essential, but let it be artistic. To hear Peter Schreier and Sviatoslav Richter for the whole journey, complete with winter-stricken coughers in a Dresden February, is to be reminded of extremes, more carefully channelled than Anders's. Nothing less will do. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE:
Schreier/Richter
Philips 478 1714 (2 discs) £17.60



TCHAIKOVSKY

1812 Festival Overture; Moscow Cantata; Slavonic March; Festival Coronation March; Festival Overture on the Danish National Anthem
Lyubov Sokolova (soprano), Alexey Markov (baritone); Mariinsky Theatre Chorus & Orchestra/Valery Gergiev
Mariinsky MAR 0503 (hybrid CD/SACD) 64:17 mins

BBC Music Direct £13.70

There's no shame in writing music to orders from on high, but it's going a bit far to say – as does Leonid Gakkiel in his booklet note for this new recording

BACKGROUND TO...



Carl Rüttli (b1949)
The Swiss composer was educated at a monastery boarding school where he studied Gregorian

chant and the organ. He continued his organ studies at the Zürich Conservatoire and also studied piano. In 1976 he came to London to study piano under Kendall Taylor and organ with Richard Latham: while there he was greatly impressed by the English choral tradition, regularly attending services at the Brompton Oratory. Inspired by this tradition, he wrote a *Missa brevis* which was eventually performed in a broadcast by the BBC Singers.